

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-01 IGA-01 SS-15 PM-03 SP-02 L-02

NSC-05 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05 /049 W

----- 092920

R 110956Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4041

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4291

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, ET, US

SUBJECT: RECRUITMENT OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

1. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE NUMBER OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS (PCVS) IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD WHO ARRIVE HERE IN JULY WILL FALL FAR SHORT OF THE NUMBER REQUESTED BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. THE POSSIBILITY OF A DRASTIC SHORTFALL (WE UNDERSTAND IT COULD REDUCE TOTAL PCVS BY HALF) DISTURBS US BECAUSE IT WOULD BE A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CREATE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR IT. WE HAVE VERY MUCH IN MIND THE FACT THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, UNLIKE THE OLD REGIME, BY NO MEANS TAKES FOR GRANTED THE VALUE OF A CONTINUING CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. WE KNOW THAT THERE ARE MANY RADICALS, INCLUDING A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER IN THE ALL-POWERFUL PROVISIONAL MINITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL (PMAC), WHO VERY MUCH OPPOSE THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND CONSTANTLY STRIVE TO DEPRECATE THE ADVANTAGES WHICH ETHIOPIA DERIVES FROM IT. ALTHOUGH THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM CANNOT COMPARE WITH THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN TERMS OF ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE EYES OF THE PMAC, A DRASTIC DECLINE IN THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FORMER PROGRAM TO ETHIOPIA'S EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER NEEDS WOULD CLEARLY AFFECT ADVERSELY ETHIOPIAN APPRAISALS REGARDING THE VALUE OF U.S. ASSISTANCE IN GENERAL. RECENT REQUESTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (WE BELIEVE ENDORSED BY THE DIRG) FOR MANY MORE VOLUNTEERS THAN THE PRESENT TARGET FIGURE FOR THE COMING YEAR CLEARLY INDICATE THAT A DRASTIC SHORTFALL WOULD BE REGARDED AS A SIGNIFICANT LOSS. AMONG THE MINISTRY'S REQUESTS FOR INCREASES IS ONE FOR 30 VOLUNTEERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT, A FIELD THAT HAS SUBSTANTIAL

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POLITICAL OVERTONES IN THE PRESENT SITUATION.

2. FOR THE ABOVE REASONS WE HOPE AND RECOMMEND THAT A VIGOROUS EFFORT BE MADE TO FULFILL THE PCV TARGET FIGURE TO THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE EXTENT. IN SO RECOMMENDING WE ARE FULLY AWARE THAT NO ONE CAN POSSIBLY GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF ALL PCVS WHO COME TO ETHIOPIA IN THESE HIGHLY UNSTABLE TIMES. NEVERTHELESS WE HAVE ALREADY GONE THROUGH WITHOUT DEATH OR INJURY TO ANY PCV IN ETHIOPIA MORE THAN A YEAR OF REVOLUTIONARY CIRCUMSTANCES, WITH THE HELP OF JUDICIOUS MOVES OF SOME OF THEM TO MORE SECURE AREAS AT CERTAIN TIMES. WE SEE NO REASON WHY THE DANGER TO PCVS IN ETHIOPIA CANNOT BE HELD TO REASONABLE AND ACCEPTABLE LEVELS IF WE CONTINUE TO WATCH LOCAL CONDITIONS CAREFULLY AND TO MOVE SOME PCVS ON A TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT BASIS WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES SO SUGGEST. IT WOULD BE OVERLY PESSIMISTIC IN OUR VIEW TO ASSUME THAT SUCH A POLICY WILL BE UNSUCCESSFUL, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE HAVE ALREADY PASSED THROUGH A PERIOD (I.E., THE INITIAL SHOCK OF THE LAND REFORM ANNOUNCEMENT) WHICH MANY OBSERVERS THOUGHT WOULD BE ONE OF GREATEST INSECURITY. WE DO THINK IT IMPORTANT OF COURSE THAT ANY VOLUNTEERS COMING HERE FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT POLITICAL STABILITY IS NOT LIKELY TO EMERGE IN ETHIOPIA IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THAT THIS INEVITABLY INVOLVES SECURITY RISKS.

3. PC/E DIRECTOR WILLARD HOING WILL BE IN WASHINGTON AT THE REQUEST OF PC/W FOR CONSULTATION THE WEEK OF APRIL 14 REGARDING THE PCV PROGRAM IN ETHIOPIA. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE SIZE OF THE PROGRAM HERE OVER THE COMING YEAR WILL BE THE MAJOR SUBJECT OF THIS CONSULTATION. ALTHOUGH WE REALIZE THAT BUDGETARY FACTORS MAY PLAY A ROLE IN THESE DISCUSSIONS, WE HOPE THE DEPARTMENT WILL ENDEAVOR DURING THIS CONSULTATION PERIOD TO INSURE THAT POLITICAL FACTORS ARE FULLY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AND THAT EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO MEET THE ESTABLISHED QUOTA FOR PCVS COMING TO ETHIOPIA THIS SUMMER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ADDIS04291
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750127-0441
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750460/aaaacddr.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 AUG 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <15 DEC 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RECRUITMENT OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS
TAGS: EAID, ET, US, PC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006